Program

	Monday 16th March
09:00 – 09:30	**Reception**
09:30 – 10:00	**Introduction** Hannah Smagh & Beatriz Pañeda Murcia
10:00 – 10:40	**From Courtyard to Corner:** **Ritual Spaces and the Materiality of Greek Domestic Religion** Hannah Smagh, The Pennsylvania State University
10:40 – 11:20	**Terracottas from the Archaic-Classical Settlement at Philia and the Use of Terracottas in Household Shrines in Ancient Thessaly** Stelios Ieremias, Directorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities, Hellenic Ministry of Culture
11:20 – 11:40	Coffee break
11:40 – 12:20	**Terracottas in the Neighborhood:** **Interactions at Classical Corinthian Shrines** Theodora Kopestonsky, University of Tennessee Knoxville
12:20 – 13:00	**Domestic Religion, Migration, and Home-Making in Hellenistic Corinth** Beatriz Pañeda Murcia, Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia
13:00 – 14:45	Lunch
14:45 – 15:25	**Glocalizing Domestic "Magic":** **Individual, Household, and Empire in an Amulet from Roman Dion** Caitlín E. Barrett, Cornell University
15:25 – 16:05	"**Mysterization" in Roman Cyrene and Crete:** **A Mode of Religious Competition in Private Contexts** Pablo Rodríguez Valdés, Universidad Carlos III de Madrid
16:05 – 16:45	**General discussion**
17:00 – 18:30	Glass offered for speakers and audience at the SIA
20:00	Dinner for speakers
	Tuesday 17th March
09:30 – 10:10	**Greek Religious Texts and How to Use Them** Katie Rask, The Ohio State University
10:10 – 10:50	**Beyond Lead:** **The Materiality of Language in Classical Sicilian Curse Tablets** Sofia Bianchi Mancini, Max Weber Centre for Advanced Cultural and Social Studies, University of Erfurt
10:50 – 11:10	Coffee break
11:10 – 11:50	**Moulding Religion in Private Spaces. An Attempt of Reassessing the Function of the Impressed Terracotta Discs from Magna Graecia** Ginevra Benedetti, Università degli Studi di Siena Davide Caruso, Scuola Archeologica Italiana Atene Valentino Gasparini, Universidad Carlos III de Madrid
11:50 – 12:30	**General discussion**
12:30 – 13:00	**Conclusions**

	Jenny Wallensten, Director of the Swedish Institute at Athens
13:00	Lunch
15:00	Visit to the Acropolis Museum

International Workshop

"Material Religion" in Private Contexts: Objects, Spaces, and Practices of Private Worship in Greece from the Classical to the Roman Era

Swedish Institute at Athens & online via Zoom
16th – 17th March 2026

Co-organizers:
Hannah Smagh, Pennsylvania State University
Beatriz Pañeda Murcia, Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia

Funding Entity: Riksbankens Jubileumsfond

Over the past fifteen years, the "Material Religion" approach has emerged as a pivotal framework in the study of ancient religions. It illuminates how religious experiences, emotions, conceptions, practices, and ethical claims are constituted through the material world, encompassing not only objects and spatial environments but also the human body and its sensorium. Humans and things are fundamentally co-constitutive, with material objects serving as active media through which individuals negotiate and structure their relationships with the divine in thought and action. Religion, as a lived phenomenon, happens in material culture and is thus inherently concrete, mediated, and experienced (Morgan 2010, 2021, 2022; Bredholt & Jensen 2018; Versluys & Woolf 2021). Built environments and portable objects, with their "affordances"—the possibilities for human action they provide through their material and stylistic characteristics under specific circumstances—and interrelations, are central *actants* (Latour 2005) in human-divine communication, shaping embodied cultic experiences and thus perceptions and understandings of the divine. Embodied and emplaced human-thing entanglements (Hodder 2011) form the cornerstone of sensation, feeling, and cognition in human-divine interactions in both ritual activity and theological reflection.

Building on this theoretical background, the two-day international workshop *"Material Religion" in Private Contexts: Objects, Spaces, and Practices of Private Worship in Greece from the Classical to the Roman Era* will explore the materiality of collective and individual religious practices conducted in ancient Greek private settings (houses, agricultural estates, workplaces, associations' headquarters, and funerary monuments). The aim is to elucidate how the material culture of private religion enabled and shaped religious experiences, feelings, ideas, behaviors, discourses, practices, and values.

Investigating the materiality of worship in private spaces is crucial for understanding the nature of everyday cultic practices that occurred beyond the spatiotemporal and normative framework of civic religion. Despite the pervasive presence of private rituals, scholars have paid limited attention to the material media of *private* worship in Greek antiquity. Thus far, the integration of a "material religion" perspective with the multiple dimensions of private cult has been largely confined to scattered studies (e.g. Raja & Rüpke 2015; Haysom, Mili & Wallensten 2024. For Rome, see Berg *et al.* 2021). There is, therefore, a need for a more focused collaborative effort to explore this issue in greater depth and with a more systematic approach.

Our workshop seeks to overcome this research gap by bringing together, for the first time, an international group of junior and senior scholars to address this specific issue. We envision this meeting as the first of many that will result in a network of researchers studying the topic. The workshop will be followed by the publication of its results as a monographic dossier in a peer-reviewed scientific journal, as well as by a shared commitment of both the organizers and the participants to maintain scientific dialogue and organize future meetings incorporating new researchers. In this way, this initiative aims to foster research on "material religion" in private contexts and to establish this topic as a fully recognized line of scholarly inquiry.

A wide array of objects, with varying degrees of perceived sacrality, served to integrate, structure, and ritually mediate contact with the divine within the multifunctional and dynamic spaces of private settings. These objects ranged from mundane artifacts of everyday life to items with primarily or exclusively ritual functions, as well as materials we commonly label as magical. Through their affordances, interconnections, and (cumulated) attributed meanings, these material things transformed the sensescapes of private spaces, playing a critical role in demarcating sacred space and time.

Drawing on the study of human engagement with this diverse range of objects, the workshop's contributions will explore the following topics:

- **Spatial and material emplacement of religion in private settings.** How was religion spatially and materially embedded in private contexts? Were cultic locations and material media permanent or ephemeral, central or peripheral within these settings? To what extent and how did the material culture of private religious practices resemble or diverge from that of civic religion or private worship conducted in public sanctuaries and civic spaces?

- **Interplay between materiality and ritual words and actions.** How did the affordances of material media interact with the verbal and performative dimensions of ritual? In particular, to what extent and how did the physical and stylistic properties of tangible things shape ritual acts and utterances, and condition their perceived effectiveness? Are there discernible correlations between specific objects and ritual gestures and/or verbal formulas? And between certain objects and the deities venerated?

- **Impact of material culture on religion.** How did material culture inform experiences, perceptions, and understandings of the sacred in private practice, while also being shaped by them? How did it contribute to negotiating and structuring human-divine relationships, across a spectrum ranging from tradition or the reproduction of *habitus* to the opening of pathways for change? Did the use of certain objects and spaces, as well as particular bodily comportments, in private cultic practices foster more immediate, intimate, or emotionally resonant interactions with the divine compared to those in civic religious contexts?

- **Comparative and diachronic analysis**. What can a comparative study of the materiality of private religious practices across time and space in Greece reveal about their variability, continuity, or evolution?

The workshop will be held in a hybrid format at the Swedish Institute at Athens on Monday 16th and Tuesday 17th March 2026. Contributions will be presented in English and will be 25 minutes in length, followed by a 15-minute discussion.

Bibliography

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